Japan Seeks to Curb Sale of Blood to Hanoi

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TOKYO, Feb. 1—The Japanese government is cracking down on some Japanese businessmen's lucrative trade in blood plasma with North Vietnam.

The Japanese Health and Welfare Ministry has just ordered one of the biggest producers to halt exports of the plasma, which is packed in sterile cans for long storability without refrigeration. A spokesman for the company involved, Nihon Seiyaku Co. Ltd., confirmed the Ministry's order, but declined to discuss the question.

However, industry sources believe the government will have a tough job on its hands halting the trade. For the past year, the sale of blood plasma to North Vietnam has been handled through trading companies who have their own representatives in Hanoi. These trading companies purchase the blood plasma on the open market in Japan.

A spokesman for the Health and Welfare Ministry said the issue is to be taken up at the Feb. 2 session of the Diet House of Councillors Audit Committee. The Ministry has been trying to get the trade stopped for some time.

It is widely believed much of the plasma is forwarded from North Vietnamese docks to Communist troops fighting in South Vietnam. North Vietnam's state trading agency has been asking the Japanese representatives in Hanoi for more of the plasma than the Japanese are able to supply.

The situation is further confused by the fact that there is a shortage of whole blood in Japan itself and ethical arguments about whether or not blood is an unfit commodity for sale in ordinary commerce.

The Ministry's order on plasma said that exports to South Vietnam would also be prohibited in the future.